PUBLIC OPINION

IN ARGENTINA ABOUT THE UNITED NATIONS

The UN Department of Public Information commissioned a public opinion poll in Argentina to assess the awareness, knowledge and image of the UN. The poll was carried out during November-December 1990.

■ THE RESULTS IN BRIEF

• Most Argentinians are quite familiar with the United Nations.

• About a third of Argentinians rate the UN performance as good. There has been a decline in those openly critical of the UN since 1985.

• A majority of those polled would like more information about the Organization's work in the areas of AIDS, drug abuse and crime prevention.

AWARENESS OF THE UNITED NATIONS

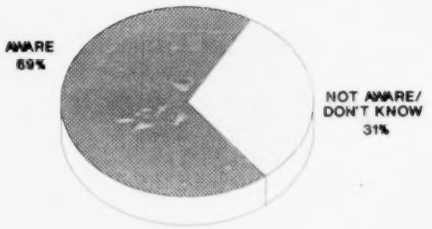

FIGURE 1

AWARENESS AND KNOWLEDGE OF THE UN

Sixty-nine per cent of Argentinians know about the United Nations. People living in the urban areas tended to be more aware of the UN than those in the rural areas. Awareness of the UN also varied according to socio-economic levels. Those in the highest social stratum were the most familiar with the Organization (97 per cent) compared to those on the lowest rung (37 per cent).

Less than a fifth (16 per cent) of all Argentinians could name a UN agency or body. The most known was UNICEF (10 per cent). UNESCO and WHO were each mentioned by four per cent. Respondents with advanced education

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ABILITY TO NAME A UN INSTITUTION

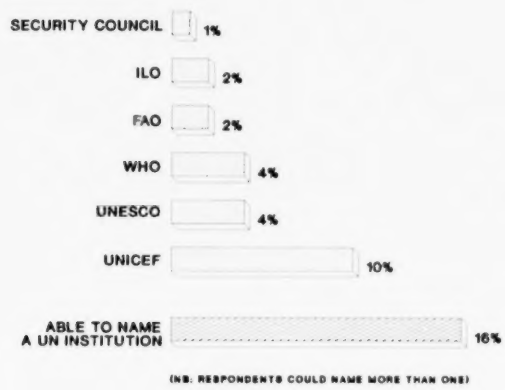


FIGURE 2

UN PERFORMANCE RATING

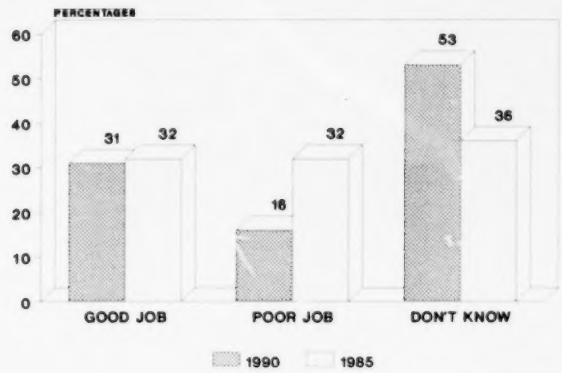


FIGURE 4

IDENTIFYING THE UN SECRETARY-GENERAL

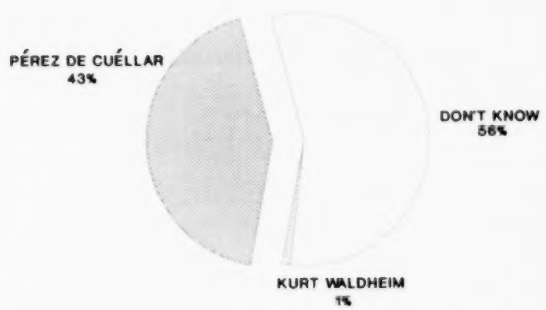


FIGURE 3

were more likely to name a UN-related agency or body than those who had no formal education. There were also significant differences between members of the various social strata. The ability to name a UN institution increased according to social status.

IDENTIFICATION OF THE UN SECRETARY-GENERAL

In another measurement of how much Argentinians know about the United Nations, 43 per cent of those surveyed identified the name of the Secretary-General from a list of the five UN Secretaries-General since 1945. Javier Pérez de Cuéllar was better known among respondents above the age of 30 than among those much younger. People who had formal education were more likely to know the name of the Secretary-General. Well over one half of those polled could not identify any of the names.

RATING UN PERFORMANCE

Argentinians were less critical of the UN performance in 1990 than they were in 1985. A 1985 Gallup poll found that 32 per cent of them rated the UN performance as poor. In the 1990 poll 16 per cent held this view. The proportion expressing a positive rating has remained effectively the same, 32 per cent in 1985 compared to 31 per cent in 1990; while those unable to venture an opinion increased by about a half, from 36 per cent to 53 per cent. Thus we may say that although public opinion in Argentina about the UN performance has not markedly improved over the last five years, the public has become less openly critical.

REASONS FOR UN PERFORMANCE RATING

The recent Gulf crisis was cited as the primary reason for evaluating the performance of the United Nations both positively and negatively.

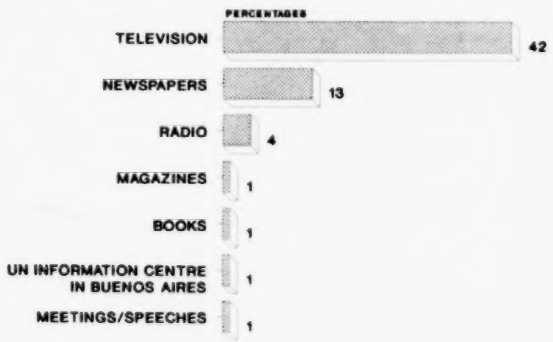
A majority (30 per cent) of those who gave the UN good job ratings based their assessment on how the UN handled the Gulf crisis. The UN role in maintaining world peace and its intervention in the Falkland Islands (Malvinas) were also cited as justifications. Other areas in which the Organization received positive remarks were: economic assistance, health and education programmes, human rights and the fight against drug trafficking.

The major reasons given by those who felt the UN was doing a poor job were: the handling of the Gulf crisis, the use of the veto by some Member States and the Organization's role in the Falkland Islands (Malvinas). Others said the UN was generally ineffective and did not adequately address Latin American problems.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Most Argentinians cited television as the prime source of news on the United Nations; it is used by four out of ten respondents. Other media (newspapers, radio, magazines and books) do not seem to be widely used.

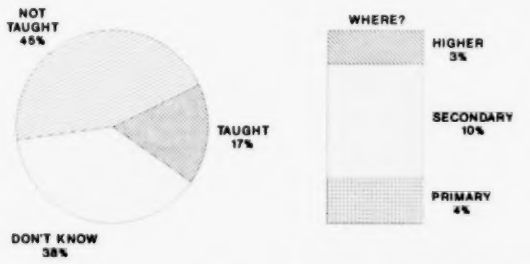
SOURCES OF INFORMATION ON THE UN



(NB. RESPONDENTS COULD NAME MORE THAN ONE)

FIGURE 8

TEACHING ABOUT THE UN



(NB. RESPONDENTS COULD INDICATE MORE THAN ONE LEVEL OF EDUCATION)

FIGURE 9

Teaching about the UN in Argentinian schools is not very extensive. Of the 17 per cent who recalled being taught about the UN, 10 per cent mentioned the secondary/high school level.

INTEREST IN UN ISSUES

A majority of Argentinians would like more information on the UN work in the fields of AIDS, drug abuse and crime prevention. Overall, they showed little interest in African economic recovery, international law and treaties and a new world information order.

INTEREST IN UN ISSUES

	VERY INTERESTED %	SOMEWHAT INTERESTED %	NOT INTERESTED %
AIDS	56	22	11
DRUG ABUSE	54	23	12
CRIME PREVENTION	51	26	12
CHILDREN'S ISSUES	48	25	14
HUMAN RIGHTS	46	27	15
WORLD FOOD PROBLEMS	45	26	16
EQUAL RIGHTS FOR WOMEN	44	29	15
INT'L PEACE AND SECURITY	43	31	13
ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION	42	30	15
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT	41	30	15
DISARMAMENT	38	29	19
REFUGEES & DISASTER RELIEF	37	31	18
RACIAL DISCRIMINATION	35	29	21
THE WORK OF THE UN IN GENERAL	34	34	18
IMPROVING HOUSING CONDITIONS	33	31	20
INTERNATIONAL DEBT CRISIS	32	33	21
POPULATION ISSUES	30	31	23
TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT	30	35	20
APARTHEID IN SOUTH AFRICA	27	26	30
DECOLONIZATION	26	26	31
NEW WORLD INFORMATION ORDER	23	31	27
INTERNATIONAL LAW & TREATIES	22	31	30
AFRICAN ECONOMIC RECOVERY	17	29	37

(NB. SOME RESPONDENTS INDICATED "DON'T KNOW" OR GAVE NO ANSWER TO SOME OF THE ISSUES)

FIGURE 7

HOW THE POLL WAS DONE

The poll was conducted in Argentina by Mora Y Araujo Noguera Y Asociados. They interviewed a nationwide representative sample of 1,100 men and women aged 15 and over. The interviews were carried out face-to-face in respondents' homes during November-December 1990. The margin of sampling error is estimated at $\pm$ 3 per cent.

The Programme Evaluation and Communications Research Unit of the United Nations Department of Public Information undertakes public opinion polls to "analyse trends of public opinion throughout the world about the activities of the United Nations and the extent to which an informed understanding of the work of the United Nations is being secured". General Assembly resolution 13(1), paragraph 13, Annex 1 of 13 February 1946.

CONCLUSION

Although most Argentinians seem to be quite familiar with and knowledgeable about the United Nations, the media, other than television, do not appear to play a very significant role in disseminating information about the Organization. Argentinians' positive attitudes towards the UN seem to be based on their assessment of how well the Organization handled the recent Gulf crisis.

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